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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the purpose of a national information policy in general, the process that led to the formation of such a policy in Zambia, and the requirements for its successful implementation. Particular attention is paid to the concept of information marketing. It is argued that such a concept would be an implementation requirement if properly applied to the current Zambian situation, and that education and training would play a key role. It is suggested that Zambia's current education system lags far behind in the development of individuals capable of processing "dynamic technology," and that, without such individuals, Zambia cannot implement a nation information policy that promotes the marketing of information as a national resource. (9 references) (Author/EW)

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This paper: The Information Marketing Concept and the
 Implementation of National Information Policy (NIP)
 in Zambia

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Abstract: An attempt is made to describe the purpose of a NIP
 in general, the process that led to the formulation
 of such a policy in Zambia and the requirements for
 its successful implementation. The paper tries to
 argue that the concept of information marketing
 could be one such requirements if properly applied
 to the situation currently obtaining in Zambia.
 Here, relevant education and training in the
 information field would certainly play a crucial
 role. An observation is made on what this means in
 the context of current thinking.

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of National Information Policy (NIP) is perhaps considered as the brainchild of Unesco's General Information Programme. In the 1970's Unesco worked very hard to impress upon its member states to formulate national information policies as a way of rationalizing and harnessing information as a national resource in each country.

National Information Policy, as opposed to National Library Policy, tends to incorporate all processes and institutions involved in the production, acquisition, processing, management, dissemination and utilization of information in all kinds of situations. Since the beginning of the decade, the concept of NIP has contributed in no small way to the development of information services in a co-ordinated and harmonized way particularly in those countries where NIPs have been implemented.

National Information Policy in Zambia: Historical Background

In Zambia, the Zambia Library Association (ZLA), began to actively consider the issue of a national information policy based on Unesco's conception and guidelines in 1982 with the appointment of a subcommittee headed by W.C. Mushipi, Head, Information and Documentation Centre of the National Council for Scientific Research (NCSR). This subcommittee prepared an interim report entitled:

The Development of Information Services in Zambia with particular
reference to the regional information system commonly known as the
Southern African documentation and Information System (SADIS).

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The main driving forces behind SADIS at the time were: ECA/Pan African documentation and Information System (ECA/PADIS), supported by OAU Head-quarters in Addis Ababa; the International Research Centre of Canada (IDRC) Information Sciences Division and of course Unesco. Between 1982 and 1986, these organizations undertook or sponsored feasibility studies, organized seminars and workshops in order to assist this region to evolve a regional information system that would meet its information requirements.

Zambia, chiefly through the efforts of ZLA, decided to contribute to these activities both at national and regional levels. Unfortunately, nothing much happened between the Mushipi Committee in 1982 and 1985. In September 1985, though, a five-day seminar on the Need for Development-Oriented National Information Policy in Zambia within the Context of the Southern African Documentation and Information System (SADIS) was organized at the University of Zambia, Lusaka, by ZLA. Resource persons and participants at this seminar, for the first time ever, included persons from outside the Library and Information Science field. It was indeed the beginning of our realization that information processing and management was never the exclusive domain of librarians especially in a country like Zambia. It was resolved that the library profession in Zambia would endeavour to work together with other professions involved in the generation, collection, storage, management distribution and utilization of information as a national resource. This, of course, is the major concern of a national information policy as observed earlier.

One of the most important recommendations directly leading to the organization of the second national seminar on NIP for Zambia in February 1987, was the appointment of a Working Party, to be convened by the presenter of this paper. ZLA dictated that the term of reference of this Working Party, to include key members of the information profession in Zambia, was to be

"To prepare a document for the establishment of a National Information Policy and Library Legislation in Zambia"

According to ZLA Council, the members of the Working Party were to be: Director, (National Archives), Librarian (Freedom House), Librarian (UNZA), Head (NCSR Information and Documentation Centre). Chief Libraries Officer (ZLS), Librarian (National Assembly) and myself representing ZLA Council. For quite obvious reasons, this Working Party turned out to be inactive until Unesco came into the act at the beginning of January 1987. As a general policy, Unesco decided to sponsor national seminars on national information policy in four countries in this region between February and April, 1987. The countries were: Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These countries were chosen because of the interest Unesco had cultivated after a consultant had undertaken a Unesco funded feasibility study in these countries. Unesco, consequently, funded the second national seminar on NIP that took place at Intercontinental Hotel, Lusaka (23-24, February 1987). True to its resolve at the end of the 1985 seminar, the 1987 seminar included participants and observers from a diverse spectrum of all groups concerned with the generation, collection, storage, management, processing and distribution of information to all types of users in the country. This seminar came up with proposals and recommendations on the issue of NIP for Zambia which were presented to the Party and its Government in a draft document entitled: National Information Policy for Zambia. The presentation was on May 5, 1987.

Because these proposals and recommendations are still confidential while the Party is studying them, I am not at liberty to go into a detailed discussion of the recommendations. Suffice to indicate here the rationale behind the recommendations made. The rationale is stated

1. Recognizing that information is accepted world-wide as a National Resource very much valued by those involved in socio-economic, politic scientific and technological activities.
2. Realizing the crucial role that a well planned and co-ordinated national information system can play in national development in our country at institutional, local, national, regional and international levels.
3. Aware that Zambia does not, at the moment, have a national machinery in the form of a NIP to assist in the harnessing of this very important resource at national end regional levels, ZLA recommende...

In the light of this rationale and assuming that the Party and its Government will favorably consider the Information Profession's submissions, I have now begun to look ahead to the implementation of this policy at some stage in future. It is with this anticipation that we should now be talking of strategies that will assist in the implementation of a NIP in Zambia once formulated. In my view, one of such a strategy with the potential to enable us deal with the problem that we have created, is the marketing strategy that I now turn to discuss with you at the start of this Workshop.

USEFUL INFORMATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MARKETING STRATEGY

The concept of marketing, as we all know, presupposes the existence of a product, a service, a commodity, etc. to be disposed of through selling. It also presupposes the presence of a consumer, a person interested in such a product, service or commodity. In our context, the commodity or product or service to be marketed happens to be information.

For the purpose of this presentation, I intend to take information to mean:

"Data, signals, facts, views, opinions, ideas, events, news, etc. of value, able to influence man's actions, behavior, and decisions as he goes about interacting with others in a given environment" (Lundu, 1982)

Obviously, this is a very wide definition of what information in general means. It does indeed bring out most aspects that must inevitably be included in a NIP. However, there is not doubt in my mind that "data, facts, views, opinions, and above all ideas" are indeed what constitutes information that the information profession in its wider context anywhere in the world is actively concerned with although as Allen Kent observes "there is no universally acceptable definition of the concept of information". I entirely agree with his admission that "concepts are in the eyes of the beholder, and not inherent in which the beholder beholds". (Kent, 1974). I would like to urge participants to deeply think about Kent's observation as it applies to this paper because this is the principal reason why I am determined to see that principles of marketing are applied to the processing and management of information especially with regard to the implementation of NIP

in Zambia. This indeed is the major theme of this presentation. In our profession, the absence of a consensus on what constitutes information has contributed greatly to the proliferation of sub professions each claiming to be the genuine representative of an information profession. For example, nowadays, we can identify the following organizations as being in the information business: IFLA, FID, American Society for Information Science, ASLIB Computer Societies, Information Technology Associations and groups, etc. I have no quarrel with such a plethora of information groups as long as each group recognizes that the others are also concerned with some aspect of information processing and management.

In my view, useful information, regardless of who claims to do what, is resource, a raw material and a commodity of value capable of being exploited both for personal gains and the good of society as whole. Useful information is indeed a major base upon which the growth of knowledge so much depends. It is these two reasons that compel me to relate information processing and management to its overall utilization for a purpose in any organization and in any society. Putting these considerations in their right perspective does tend to make any discussion on the marketing of information in a country like Zambia relevant, meaningful and purposeful.

As we know, concern with information production/generation, organisation, management, dissemination and utilisation has recently become profitable business. It is only in countries like Zambia that the notion of "information industry" has not been fully examined and its implications not quite understood by both the information professional, the policy-maker and the information consumer. If indeed we have to push this idea of information industry to its logical conclusion, then it is high time we accepted that useful information is a factor of (i) User attitude/behavior (ii) task assigned, (iii) national context and (iv) category of organism (see figure next page).

In my opinion, the analysis of useful information as is affected by the marketing concept must stress the interrelationship between these four very critical factors. And the idea of marketing information in the context of a NIP must be linked to these factors for no one can market any product in a vacuum. Certain conditions must surely be present for the effective implementation of any marketing principles. I now turn to briefly outline the essential aspect of information marketing approach.

THE CONCEPT OF INFORMATION MARKETING DEFINED

The discussion thus far has centered on useful information as a commodity or product in the marketing sense because, by its nature, information is meant to satisfy needs and desires of individuals in society and even needs of society as a whole. As observed, our emphasis has been on facts, data, opinion, idea, etc. and knowledge rather than on the medium carrying that information. For example, nothing has been said on the role of printed media such as books and journals, computer technology, non-print media, etc. in the way information is processed and managed to satisfy human need. In short, our interest has been in the content of the message and its impact on the receiver, the ultimate consumer of the information - in our case, any Zambian national for whom the information policy is meant to be. Therefore, the product we are at pains to subject to market forces is an idea or a cause whose transaction is rather abstract. In our view, both bicycles and statistical information should be products to be marketed. However, there is a difference between the two types of products: the

former (the bicycle) is obviously a tangible good whose benefit to the individual are easily discernible, while the latter (statistical information) is an abstract idea whose benefit to an individual may not immediately be noticed or appreciated. This is a fact - and is a fact that makes the marketing of information extremely difficult, frustrating and even doubtful - particularly in a country like Zambia.

Applying marketing principles to information production, distribution, and utilisation assumes that information plays a crucial part in the problem-solving process. It also assumes that consumer decisions are based on the critical analysis of the problem which must, by and large, take into consideration emotion as well as reason thus directly or indirectly acknowledging the presence of needs and desires to be satisfied in one way or another. This observation is clearly shown on the diagram given earlier (see Fig. 1) particularly with respect to TASK ASSIGNED.

As information professionals, we are very much aware why there exists a variety of information systems in each country and sometimes even in each organisation. For example, traditionally, there are five types of information systems that we know of: academic, public, school, special, and in some cases, college libraries. In addition, we speak of archives, documentation centres, information analysis centres, museums and currently management information systems (MIS). I contend that the chief reason for the existence of all these different types of information systems is an attempt to match information products handled by each of these systems with the information users' wants and needs, which no doubt is what marketing is all about. It is in this context that I tend to agree with Fine's statement that

"A product is developed to satisfy a need identified by the marketer (usually through marketing research upon a target group). The marketing approach implies specification of a product to be engineered in a manner so as to resolve some problem facing target consumers" (Fine, 1982).

Those of us who have been following current developments in information processing and management will indeed agree that one of the major advantages of information technology is that it enables us to produce information products tailored to satisfy identified target groups e.g. researchers in a specified field, policy-makers or even professionals and individuals in society. In this way, we are indirectly applying this particular marketing principle to our work as information professionals. For examples, at the moment, as a librarian of a newly established Cooperbelt University, I see my major function as being:

1. To identify the problems and needs of lecturers, students, researchers and administrators;
2. To demonstrate to each group of information users how the information resources that the Library has acquired and will acquire can help in solving some of their problems and hence satisfy their needs in the process of performing tasks assigned to each group;

3. To provide the University community with continuous feedback on the needs and attitudes of information users towards the service I provide.

These, I believe, are functions that each one of you present is required to do even at your own institutions.

As Fine suggests in the book quoted earlier, the marketing approach involves these considerations as well as several other key questions enumerated below:

1. What is the product? In our case, the product is information and is rather an abstract product.
2. What are some other products of the same general type? All these products relating to the production, acquisition, distribution and utilization of knowledge for the benefit of oneself and society.
3. In what type of transaction is the product exchange? In published and unpublished documents. In information technology and even in oral transaction?
4. What must be decided about strategies for design, pricing, communication and distribution? In our case, the Zambian environment must create conditions in which the value of information for national development will be appreciated before any meaningful strategies can be recommended. Our approach to the national information policy in Zambia is guided to a certain extent by this very important consideration. And I shall have one or two words to say about it in the second part of my paper. In the meantime, I would like to pose an hypothetical question to the participants at this workshop. Are libraries, as currently designed in Zambia, the answer to this key issue?
5. Who are the information consumers in Zambia? Why do they need information? In most cases, we assume to know who the consumers are and why they need information. I contend this is wrong.
6. How do these consumers differ from one another? An attempt to find out about this is necessary if the marketing strategy is to be successfully applied to the implementation of a NIP in Zambia.

If these questions are very closely scrutinised particularly with regard to figure 1, those with lingering doubts will see just how a marketing approach can easily be applied to information as a marketable commodity in the same way that sugar, bread, bicycle, etc. can. However, for the marketing strategy to be applicable in a particular environment, certain conditions as pointed earlier must be present in that environment. I now turn to discussing prospects and problems of applying the marketing information strategy to the implementations of a NIP in Zambia once the Party and its Government promulgates such a policy.

INFORMATION MARKETING IN ZAMBIA: PROSPECTS

The discussions on the prospects of marketing information in the context of NIP in Zambia again centres on the figure showing useful information as a factor of: User attitude, task assigned, national context and category of organism (see figure 1). In the case of Zambia, task assigned, national context and category of organism pose few problems and constraints to our understanding and analysis

of information as a marketable commodity. In terms of task assigned, we see that Zambia is very much concerned with the education of her people; she wants them to be well informed through all types of communication media; she wants culture and recreation to be promoted throughout the nation; both basic and applied research is being encouraged in all sectors of the economy; and decision-making at personal, organizational and national levels is obviously a continuous process.

In terms of national development efforts, there is no doubt that the nation's leadership has stressed these areas necessary to enable Zambia survive the current economic depression. All the previous national development plans and the current national interim plan that runs until the end of this year, are strategies to create conditions in which the country's economy will become strong and thrive in this difficult world. It is in the context that emphasis has been on the restructuring of the economy in order to lessen its dependence on mining by exploiting her other natural resources. In other words, Zambia's national development policies and strategies are increasingly meant to promote self-reliance so that dependence on sources outside her borders is minimised and perhaps eventually totally eliminated.

In as far as category of organism is concerned, Zambia has certainly created institutions and organisations, both public and private to enable her carry out national development programmes at local, national and international levels. For example, there is the Party and the Government with its ministries and departments, we have parastatal organisations such as Zambia Industrial and Mining Company (ZIMCO), INDECO, Bank of Zambia, ZCCM, etc. There are also research institutes embracing almost all sectors of the economy e.g. Mt. Makula Research Station (Agriculture). National Council for Scientific Research (Science and Technology), Tropical Diseases Research Centre (Health), Copperbelt University and University of Zambia (Higher Education, Training, Manpower Development, Research and Development in every subject field), the Party's Research Bureau (Political, economic, and cultural issues, etc.), and many others too numerous to mention. Furthermore, private companies are everywhere in the country.

From this observation, to get back to our argument, one tends to agree that Zambia has indeed created an environment in which useful information can play a major role in the realization of the country's development goals. It is a potential environment in which, given right approach and orientation, the proclamation of a NIP would surely support proper development of Information Services to sustain national development efforts. Unfortunately, such a prospect remains a daunting task for the reasons that hinge most strangely on the fourth factor that contributes to what makes useful information a reality: User attitude. It is to this factor that this paper turns its final thrust.

INFORMATION MARKETING IN ZAMBIA: PROBLEMS

As a general rule, one would like to describe most of the problems likely to be encountered in the process of implementing a NIP in Zambia to currently depressed economy and to the hostile nature of the environment in which the proper processing and management of information as national resource can meaningfully take place. In my view this is only half of the problem. The other half is attributed to both information user attitude and the general attitude of the information professional themselves in Zambia. Allow me to expend on this rather very sensitive assertion. Truly speaking, user attitude towards information is

not at all encouraging in this country. This indifferent attitude has perhaps developed partly as a result of our tradition and partly through our type of education and training.

Emphasis in this paper is on the role of education in imparting technical know-how to individuals society as a whole. For the present, technical know-how is used in the same context as technology which, according to Nyakotey and Adei is meant to be:

"the sum of knowledge, skills and methods related to the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services including organisation there of. In other words, the essence of technology is technical capability of people rather than the output of a system" (Nyakotey & Adei, 1987).

In other publication, Adei observes that imparting such knowledge to another is the essence of technology transfer (Adei, 1987).

I have adopted this definition of technology because I deem it extremely relevant to the theme of this workshop in general and to the present discussion in particular.

In her 24 years of independence, Zambia as a nation has created an educational infrastructure through which technology as understood here could be transferred, and disseminated to the majority of Zambians. As I have contested in another paper, the process of education is one aspect likely to have a crucial impact on the notion of information as marketable commodity of value. But the type of education bequeathed to us by the British, though slightly modified by the 1977 Educational Reforms, has unhappily for us done very little to impart the find of technology required to promote proper utilization of information as a resource of value.

Undoubtedly, the current Zambian educational system has definitely succeeded to produce people possessing what Farrell refers to as

"Static technology - the kind of knowledge that enables the possessor to carry out certain routine tasks and functions successfully e.g. copy-typist"

What the Zambian educational system has miserably failed to produce are many Zambians possessing what Farrell terms as "dynamic technology - the kind of knowledge that makes the possessor understand the scientific principles governing his work and as such is capable of improving, modifying or changing it to suit changing circumstances. Dynamic technology is the capacity to innovate and invent" (Forell, 1979).

In the Zambian situation, one can indeed talk with satisfaction that there are alot of educated Zambians in the sense that they possess static technology. These Zambians carry out routines in their Offices, factories or on their farms. The ratio of this type of educated Zambians to these possessing dynamic technology is dangerously tilted in favour of the former. This is a situation that must be arrested if the marketing strategy is to be applied effectively to information production, processing and management within the NIP framework.

Because this distinction is an critical to the appreciation of the problems that promoting marketing information approach may encounter in Zambia, I have decided to reproduce in full what I observed in another paper. This will be one way of putting across this type of argument to a wider audience of fellow Zambian information professionals. In arguing that education provided a base for the transfer of dynamic technology that might lead to the building of technological capability for the survival of Zambia as a viable nation, I wrote then:

As people who have attained a certain level of education in Zambia know, the Zambian traditional environment is not really conducive to the promotion of information utilization for economic, social, scientific, technology and political development. This is mainly because of the prevailing cultural, psychological and traditional beliefs, attitudes, values, behavior, etc., which contribute to the character of dependence upon the notion "nature will provided" or "the other fellow will do it." This is the total dependence syndrome that tends to stifle the application of dynamic technology to changing situations. Nicholas Wallaston (although I do not entirely agree with his observation) provides what is meant by my contention when he writes.

"People sit idly on the verandas, as always in Africa, waiting for something to happen" (Wallaston, 1982).

In my opinion the "waiting for-something-to-happen" attitude, mentality, behavior, custom - you name it - is not likely to create a motivated market segment that would find access to information and its proper utilization a regarding experience in policy-making, planning and research, unless as Phillip Kingsley (formerly with the University of Zambia and now based at the University of Swaziland) suggests

"special efforts are made at familiarization and training in order to change the attitude, values, psychology, orientation and thinking of individuals and grouss in Zambia" (Kingsley, 1980)

I strongly contend that this happens to be the most important component of information marketing approach in Zambia. It is the single most critical component that will make or break the transfer to technology both within and from outside Zambia.

Let it be pointed out that possessing dynamic technology is pertinent to information experts as well. There is no doubt that the role of the information expert - professional librarian, documentalist, information scientist, archivist, etc. - will be critical in the process of change particularly as in the implementation of a NIP in Zambia.

Accepting that information is a resource of value that can be marketed requires that a person with the responsibility to market it must, by and large, have a good knowledge - the dynamic technology that makes him/her understand the local market and its social, cultural, traditional and psychological environment that may have a bearing on the marketing of the commodity. As I queried earlier, just how many Zambian information professionals possess this dynamic technology? And how many of them behave like copy typists with regard to the introduction of appropriate information service? How often have Zambian information experts adopted the "waiting-for-something-to-happen" stance with regard to the National Information Policy issues, to the government's attitude towards information

services in Zambia? My contention is that modern information experts must be the first to condemn the "waiting-for-something-to-happen" mentality if they are to make their presence felt in Zambia society. I hasten to concede that this is a long and arduous road, fraught with insurmountable obstacles in view of the hostile environment in which the marketing of information must inevitably take place.

Whether or not external assistance from such organisations as the British Council, and others will be put to better and effective use in respect to the development of information and documentation services in Zambia will largely depend on the attitude adopted by information experts regarding the concept of information marketing and its relevance to the NIP issue especially at the implementation stage. Needless to say information must be utilized if it has to make any impact on the society that produces, acquires and organises it.

CONCLUSION

During the last four to five years, I have personally been involved in directing the evolution of a properly co-ordinated national information system in Zambia. I have done so because of my conviction that information is indeed a national resource without which this country may not be able to grapple with its national problems. In the process, I have found myself chairing two very important committees established by Zambia Library Association. The first of this committee was on National Union Catalogue. Despite the work put into it so far, not much has come out of it. Then came the Committee on National Information Policy for Zambia (NIP).

Again, in spite of the enthusiasm shown by everyone in ZLA, when that time came to put ideas together, most librarians decided to shy away from the problem. It remained the concern of few individuals to carry on with the task of preparing the document for presentation to the Party. Now that the Party appears to be responding positively to the issue of a NIP for Zambia, Lungu asks:

"After the Policy, what next? What will happen to the enthusiasm and dedication so tirelessly cultivated in the local information experts? Will these experts still be as enthusiastic by the time the NIP proposals get official government approval? What should they do to keep the interest in the issue burning while the proposals are undergoing government scrutiny?" (Lungu, 1987).

I believe that some of the answers to these questions will be provided by participants at this workshop. It is in this context that I appreciate the importance of this workshop which one hopes will go a long way to providing guidelines for the future evolution of the information marketing strategy within the NIP framework in Zambia.

Finally, I see as our basic goals for the future:

- a. To protect the existing service and resource base
- b. To enhance the services and resource base by applying the information marketing strategy

- c. To change services, methodologies, opportunities, and circumstances as required to increase our effectiveness and our efficiency.

It is in connection with this last mentioned goal that those information experts possessing dynamic technology will obviously excel and play a vital role in the long process of implementing a NIP that the Information Profession in Zambia has worked for so hard.

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